

strategy would be to assure that tampons, and menstrual pads for good measure, contain no dioxin." Why has there been far more testing on the possible health effects of chlorine-bleached coffee filters than on chlorine-bleached tampons and related products? My bill seeks to address this inadequacy, and finally give women the most accurate, up-to-date information available regarding this critical health concern.

Although the FDA currently requires tampon manufacturers to monitor dioxin levels in their finished products, the results are not available to the public. When I—as a Member of Congress—requested the information, the FDA told me it was proprietary and therefore could not be released. It should be noted the dioxin tests relied upon by the FDA are done by the manufacturers themselves, who, not surprisingly insist their products are safe. Some of my constituents have written to say that this is the equivalent of the fox guarding the hen-house.

How much dioxin exposure is considered safe for humans? And does the fact that tampons are in direct contact with absorbent tissue, and for extended periods of time, make whatever levels of dioxin tampons possess even more dangerous? Is this the equivalent of a ticking time bomb, capable of increasing women's risks for several life-threatening or fertility-threatening diseases? Unfortunately there are no easy answers. We simply don't have instructive, persuasive evidence either way.

Many experts believe, however, if the slightest possibility exists that dioxin residues in tampons could harm women, the dioxin should simply be eliminated. I also believe we should err on the side of protecting women's health. Tampon manufacturers are not required to disclose ingredients to consumers, although many have taken the positive step of voluntarily disclosing this information. Unfortunately, women are still being forced to take the word of the industry-sponsored research that these products are completely safe.

I should also note that this is not the first time a Member of Congress has expressed concern about this issue. In 1992, the late Representative Ted Weiss of New York brought the issue up in a subcommittee hearing of the Committee on Government Operations. He did this after his staff had uncovered internal FDA documents which suggested the agency had not adequately investigated the danger of dioxin in tampons.

My bill, The Tampon Safety & Research Act (H.R. 890), would direct the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct research to determine the extent to which the presence of dioxin, synthetic fibers, and other additives in tampons and related menstruation products pose any health risks to women. An NIH study would provide American women with independent research, so they will not have to rely solely on research funded by tampon manufacturers.

The second bill I have introduced, The Robin Danielson Act, calls for a program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to track instances of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). This bill is named in memory of Robin Danielson, a 44 year-old mother of two who last year of TSS. This bill address-

es the many potentially harmful additives in tampons, including chlorine compounds, absorbency enhancers, and synthetic fibers, as well as deodorants and fragrances. Most people are surprised to learn these additives are commonly found in these products.

Toxic Shock Syndrome is a rare bacterial illness which caused over 50 deaths between 1979 and 1980, when the link between tampons and TSS was first established. According to a 1994 study, of the Toxic Shock cases occurring in menstruating women, up to 99% were using tampons. Obviously Toxic Shock Syndrome is still a women's health concern, and its link to tampons has become more clear. We do not know enough about the potential risks associated with such additives. Independent research has already shown synthetic fiber additives in tampons amplify toxins, which are associated with Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Reporting of TSS to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is currently optional and uneven. No one knows the actual number of TSS occurrences or deaths. Because doctors do not report all cases of TSS and because local health departments are swamped with other higher-ranking concerns, Toxic Shock is greatly under-reported. My bill establishes a CDC program to implement mandatory collection of Toxic Shock Syndrome data.

I want to share an excerpt from a letter written to me by a TSS survivor addressing the importance of The Robin Danielson Act and TSS research: "I think women are misinformed about the dangers and risks that go with using tampons. I know that I remember hearing about it years ago but had always thought that tampons now were very safe to use. Apparently this is not true and many women today are dying from this disease and it goes unreported."

Women, like Robin Danielson, are still dying from this terrible disease. It is imperative that we are able to accurately inform women of the risk of Toxic Shock associated with tampon use, and that women are well aware of that risk. We know there is a dangerous link between tampon use and TSS. What we don't know is how prevalent the disease is among tampon users. The only means to determine the current risk of Toxic Shock and to raise awareness of the disease is to require systematic reporting through the CDC.

Currently, the CDC believes that women are at increased risk for developing Toxic Shock due to a false sense of security, believing that there is no longer a risk for developing the disease. To make matters worse, the diagnosis of Toxic Shock is difficult because the symptoms are flu-like and can be easily misdiagnosed or ignored. Knowing the continued risk for contracting Toxic Shock is the only way to raise awareness among women and their physicians. More knowledgeable women and physicians will recognize TSS symptoms earlier, diagnose Toxic Shock more readily, and prevent needless deaths.

The fact is, women do not have the information they need to make sound decisions about their health. For the sake of women's well-being, we need accurate, independent information. American women have a right to know about any potential hazards associated with tampons and other related products. It is only

when women fully understand the consequences that they can make truly informed decisions about their reproductive health.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in this fight to get accurate health information to the women of America. Their future fertility, and perhaps their lives, may depend on it.

HONORING COLORADO BOYS
STATE TRACK 2A CHAMPIONS—
HOLYOKE

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 1999

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Holyoke boys track team on their impressive State 2A Championship. These young men displayed an impressive combination of talent, determination, and teamwork to earn a share of the 2A State Championship.

The State 2A Championship is the highest achievement in high school track. The champions receive a coveted trophy which symbolizes more than just the team and its coach, Mr. Vann Manly. It also represents the staunch support of the runners' families, fellow students, school personnel and the community. From now on, these people can point to the 1999 boys track team with pride, and know they were part of a remarkable athletic endeavor. Indeed, visitors to Holyoke and the school will see a sign proclaiming the boys 2A State Championship, and know something special had taken place there.

The Holyoke track team is a testament to the old adage that the team wins games, not individuals. Each team member should be proud of his own role. These individuals are the kind of people who lead by example and serve as role-models. With the increasing popularity of sports among young people, local athletes are heroes to the youth in their home towns. I admire the discipline and dedication these high schoolers have shown in successfully pursuing their dream.

The memories of this storied year will last a lifetime. I encourage all involved, but especially the Holyoke runners, to build on this experience by dreaming bigger dreams and achieving greater successes. I offer my best wishes to the team as they move forward from their State 2A Championship to future endeavors.

IN MEMORY OF DONALD L.
ALFIERO

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 1999

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise with great sorrow on the passing of Donald L. Alfiero of Norwick, Connecticut. Don was a friend to me and thousands in Norwick, a dedicated husband and a tireless public servant.